

AT A MEETING OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ON MARCH 14, 2012
IN THE BOARD ROOM, SECOND FLOOR, COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, CHRISTIANSBURG,
VIRGINIA:

On a motion by Mr. Tuttle, seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously carried the Planning Commission elected Bryan Rice as Temporary-Chair for the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Rice, Temporary-Chair called the meeting to order.

A moment of silence was held in memory of Malvin "Pug" Wells who passed away on March 7, 2012.

Mr. Rice stated all members of the Planning Commission had enjoyed working with Mr. Pug Wells. He was a highly respected and admired member of the Commission and of Montgomery County. He extended his appreciation to the family for their presence.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

Mr. Tuttle established the presence of a quorum.

Present: John Tuttle, Secretary
 Frank Lau, Member
 Joel Donahue, Member
 Robert Miller, Member
 Bryan Rice, Member
 Chris Tuck, Board of Supervisors Liaison
 Steve Sandy, Planning Director
 Dari Jenkins, Planning & Zoning Administrator
 Brea Hopkins, Planning & Zoning Technician
 Jamie MacLean, Development Planner

Absent: Walt Haynes, Chair
 Ryan Thum, Vice-Chair
 William Seitz, Member

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

On a motion by Mr. Miller, and seconded by Mr. Donahue, and unanimously carried the agenda was approved.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Request by **Forest Hills At Belview** (Agent: Balzer & Associates) to amend a proffer statement and master plan previously approved on March 5, 2007 (ORD-FY-07-23) to remove/revise trail locations for 17.927 acres zoned Residential Multi-Family (RM-1) as shown on the revised plan submitted by the applicant entitled "Forest Hills Master Plan". The property is located at 180 Belview Drive (in the 3200 block of Peppers Ferry Road) and is identified as Tax Parcel No. 64-A-42 (Acct # 017168) in the Prices Fork Magisterial District

(District E). The property currently lies in an area designated as Village Expansion in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and further described as Mixed Use and Medium Density Residential within the Belview Village Plan.

Ms. Jenkins introduced the request. She reviewed maps and discussed the background of the property. The development was approved in 2007. The Belview Village Plan and the Montgomery County 2025 Comprehensive Plan support Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) and safe connections from residential areas to the school. The applicant is proposing to remove proposed trails from within the development and add additional 100 ft. of sidewalks for connectivity within the development. The reasons stated have been financial, construction related, and safety related. The county is currently working on developing a SRTS travel plan for Belview elementary including installation of a safe pedestrian crosswalk on Route 114. Ms. Jenkins reviewed the proposed trail plan. The applicant does not wish to install the suggested connection to Route 114 to tie into the crosswalk for the school due to topography and other reasons. Staff feels the proposal is not consistent with the Planning and Land Use chapter of the Montgomery County 2025 Comprehensive Plan, or the Belview Village Plan. As proposed, this development does not meet the goals and objectives of the future land use for this area and does not qualify for consideration of amendment of the proffered conditions.

Mr. Miller asked if the trail proposed by staff would tie in to the proposed pedestrian crosswalk outlined in the safe route to schools project.

Ms. MacLean noted the trail connecting the residential development to Route 114 is critical to tie into the SRTS program and the proposed crosswalk.

Mr. Rice opened the public hearing.

Mr. Mark Kinser, owner, stated that the project was approved in 2007 and supported by HUD, Economic Development Authority, BOS, etc. Numerous amounts of money have been spent for Village Planning, PSA, Infrastructure, in addition to the ten (10) acres dedicated for open space. It would be unsafe to build a trail connecting to Route 114 before the crossover is installed.

Mr. Steve Semones, Balzer & Associates, stated the trails previously proposed made sense on paper; however, now there are security issues because the trails go through backyards. The owner has dedicated \$30,000 for the county to use as match funds to obtain additional grants. The owner will agree to a future trail but not until the other supporting infrastructure is available. Due to topography, steps and handrails will be required. In addition, it may not be feasible to construct the trail to line up with crossover. It should be noted the owner has provided a bus shelter for the school children, which has sidewalks leading to it.

Mr. Kinser noted he was willing to add a proffer to dedicate \$2500 toward SRTS and dedicate space for the trail.

Mr. Miller asked if the owner was proffering money only or trail construction. Consideration needs to be given to the children or families that will utilize the school grounds when schools are closed.

Mr. Semones clarified the owner was not proffering construction of the trail.

Mr. Kinser stated it could be years before a grant is obtained and a safe crosswalk is installed.

Mr. Rice asked if a cost analysis regarding the sidewalk/trail had been done.

Mr. Semones stated it had not and \$2500 would most likely not pay for construction.

Mr. Donahue stated it was unacceptable to allow children to go 300 ft. to school with no sidewalks. If the owner is committed to the project, he should be willing to construct the sidewalk proposed by staff. If they prefer to wait on the crosswalk, a proffer guaranteeing construction by a future date or once the crosswalk is installed would be acceptable.

Mr. Semones noted that the existing access where the trail would be located serves other parcels. The easement has been there and was transferred with the property; however, if that road turns into a public road the trails could be demolished.

Mr. Rice asked staff to clarify if the money could be proffered, and if so, would a cost estimate be required.

Mr. Sandy stated it would have to be proffered. Other options can be considered such as modifying proffer 13 to include this trail or add a proffer that trail will be built upon completion of a crosswalk. Staff's currently plans on applying for a transportation enhancement grant and using the \$35,000 as a partial match. The SRTS grant if obtained cannot be used to construct the sidewalk/trail on their property. Those funds can only be used for improvements in the VDOT right of way and on school property.

Mr. Rice stated he had never been in favor of trails behind residences because of security issues. This site has difficult topography. He noted that eliminating proffered conditions after rezoning is approved could set a bad precedence. The sidewalk to 114 is going to be needed at some point.

Mr. Sandy noted that staff agrees the trails in red on the plan are not realistic; however, there may be other alternatives that would be beneficial. There is not a disagreement that children should not be introduced to Route 114 at this point but there will be a time when the trail is needed.

Ms. Elizabeth Moneyhun, Blacksburg, stated she was a strong supporter of trails; however, trails in backyards are a bad idea. SRTS goal is to get people moving. There are obstacles, but can't dismiss trails because of them. There are obstacles to building units too, but we build them.

There being no additional comments the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Lau stated he was not convinced that the trail is going to be worthwhile.

Ms. Jenkins stated the trail would not only be utilized by children going to school. It will be used after school hours as well.

Mr. Tuck stated he frequently had taken his kids to the playground at Belview because there are no other playgrounds in Walton area.

Mr. Miller noted the need to ensure safety regardless of the number of kids walking to or from the school.

Mr. Tuttle stated it was reasonable to remove the previously approved trails.

A motion was made by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Donahue to deny Request by **Forest Hills At Belview** (Agent: Balzer & Associates) to amend a proffer statement and master plan previously approved on March 5, 2007 (ORD-FY-07-23) to remove/revise trail locations for 17.927 acres zoned Residential Multi-Family (RM-1) as shown on the revised plan submitted by the applicant entitled "Forest Hills Master Plan".

Ayes: Donahue, Miller, Rice

Nays: Tuttle, Lau

Abstain: None

(Mr. Lau indicated after the meeting he intended to vote for denial of the request)

PUBLIC ADDRESS:

Mr. Rice opened the public address; however, there being no speakers, the public address session was closed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Safe Route to Schools Projects

– Auburn Elementary & Middle School

Mrs. Hopkins stated the task force had a series of four (4) meetings to discuss the components of the travel plan and provide Planning/PDC staff with the information needed to draft the travel plan. Some of the highest priority barriers that the taskforce identified were: drop-off and pick-up process creates congestion and unsafe behaviors; missing or insufficient walkways and paths; crossing streets and intersections is difficult or dangerous; and, a major roadway divides the school from residential areas and VA Primary Rt. 8. The main goals identified by the taskforce were: improve drop off/pick up area(s); install sidewalks and paths to provide pedestrian and cyclist friendly connections to nearby neighborhoods; install a safe crossing on Route 8.

Ms. Hopkins noted a public meeting will be held March 15th at Auburn High School. Notices have been sent to owners in Auburn Acres subdivision that directly adjoin a pedestrian trail easement.

Mr. Miller stated the intersection at Fairview Church Road and Riner Road needs improvement.

– Belview Elementary

Mrs. MacLean stated the Belview taskforce(s) had a series of four (4) meetings to discuss the components of the travel plan and a public meeting was held in coordination with a PTO event at the elementary school. Some of the highest priority barriers that the taskforce identified were: Route 114; crossing streets and intersections is dangerous; Missing or insufficient walkways; school walkways/paths are not accessible to students with disabilities due to topography; drop-off and pick-up process creates congestion and safety concerns. The main goals identified by the taskforce were: improve existing drop off/pick up area; install a safe crosswalk on Route 114; and, provide pedestrian and cyclist friendly connections to nearby neighborhoods.

Mrs. MacLean stated that a draft of both travel plans should be completed following the Auburn community meeting. Staff will request that the Planning Commission endorse the travel plans prior to their submittal to VDOT for review. The final travel plan will be submitted by the end of April for final approval by VDOT. Once Montgomery County has an approved travel plan, Montgomery County and/or Montgomery County Public Schools will have the opportunity to apply for a grant to implement some or all of the proposed infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Miller stated he would like to commend staff for taking on the extra task of developing a Safe Routes to Schools Travel Plan for Auburn and Belview.

Mr. Sandy stated the County was working with the NRV Planning District Commission to complete the travel plans. The goal is to get them approved so the county can apply for funding this upcoming year.

Mr. Tuck noted that Ms. Biggs had good suggestion during the last board meeting and the Board of Supervisors has voted to put a brass plaque on one of the seats in honor of Mr. Wells.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.